

Cochlear HEARO recognised

Brisbane resident Annette Gilmore has been recognised for her outstanding contribution to the advancement of hearing health in Australia, receiving the Queensland HEARO Award from Cochlear Limited, the global leader in cochlear and bone conduction implant technology.

Annette, a cochlear implant recipient and a key member of the Cochlear Awareness Network (CAN), received the HEARO Award for her tireless efforts in raising awareness of hearing loss and the solutions available to help hearing impaired adults and children connect with the world around them.

Cochlear's annual HEARO Awards program recognises the outstanding achievements of volunteers, recipients and leading health professionals dedicated to the advancement of hearing health. Annette's award is even more special as she's only been a CAN member since August.

"It's a great honour to have received the Cochlear HEARO Award 2010 for Queensland," she says. "As a CAN member I provide advice, support and accurate information about cochlear implants to enquirers, members and their families and friends of hearing impaired people. I feel privileged to be able to assist cochlear implant candidates and recipients in their journey back to the world of sound."

"I never dreamt I would be able to hear, let alone have the ability to speak clearly and be able to promote the opportunity for every deaf person who is suitable for a cochlear implant to go forward with confidence."

And Annette truly deserves this recognition. Not only is she a dynamic CAN volunteer, Annette's cochlear implant has enabled her to be an inspiring member of the local community. She's involved with the following organisations and initiatives:

- Coordinator for People with Disabilities Support Network (PWD) for Public Service
- Qualified Career Planning Officer for PWD
- Motivational speaker and facilitator for many different organisations
- Public guest speaker for Rotary Clubs, Probus and Lions Clubs

- Annually conducts and is facilitator for "Communication with the Hearing Impaired Colleagues in the workplace" a Basic Australian Sign Language (AUSLAN).

Annette's story

I was diagnosed with severe sensorineural hearing loss at 18 months of age. Fortunately my mother was very patient with me which is why I speak so clearly today. Every time I mispronounced a word, my mum taught me how to say it correctly.

As I got older, my hearing decreased considerably. In 2003, my audiologist recommended a cochlear implant, but due to my lack of knowledge, I refused and struggled on with more powerful hearing aids.

Even my work suffered. I've worked for the Queensland Government for the last twelve years and during that time, tried to get better positions by applying for higher level jobs. The majority of positions I applied for required the applicant to be able to answer telephones which I was not able to do. A few of the positions required specific qualifications which I was unable to achieve as I had a lot of trouble studying.

Hearing aids weren't the answer...

After two years, I realised the hearing aids weren't helping me much so I started researching and talking to others who had a cochlear implant to learn about their personal story and experience. I was truly inspired hearing about the difference it had made in their lives and the new confidence it had given them.

Armed with this knowledge I finally took the plunge and had my cochlear implant in 2007. The operation was a success and only required an overnight stay in the hospital. Two weeks later I was 'switched on' (i.e the external sound processor was turned on).

After a period of adjustment I was amazed at all the things I could hear for the first time, like plastic bags rustling, water running and birds singing. I could even hear my pants making noises when walking which I found very peculiar!

And my career has since taken off. I was seconded as Acting Training Officer for



• Annette Gilmore

within Public Services. If I didn't have my cochlear implant, I never would have had the courage or the confidence to apply for this position after being passed over so many times previously.

Looking back over my career, I remember thinking I would be trapped doing the same type of work at the same level for the rest of my life and it was devastating. Now I'm excited about where my career is heading for the first time in twelve years, and believe I can overcome any hurdles that I may face, including completed my Certificate IV in Training and Assessment in April 2010.

It has been a great achievement for me both having a cochlear implant and conquering the challenges that having it, has given me.

I'm now a guest speaker for Rotary, Lions and Probus Clubs and since August 2010, have been a CAN volunteer promoting the wonderful benefits of having a cochlear implant.

In 2009, Annette was the deserved recipient of the Kaye Byrne Encouragement Award for the project - "Communication with Hearing Impaired Colleagues in the Workplace" at Police Headquarters on the International Day of people with a disability. She was also nominated for the Outstanding Student Achievement Award at Brisbane North Institute of TAFE Graduation in December 2010.

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